

your
Connexus Connection

For Connexus Energy Members

Issued July 2024

**Powering our
members and
communities**



Leadership of our Cooperative



Cash Back is coming

Cash Back is calculated based on member electricity purchases during the year. Expect to see credits reflected in your August bill. It pays to be a member of our co-op!

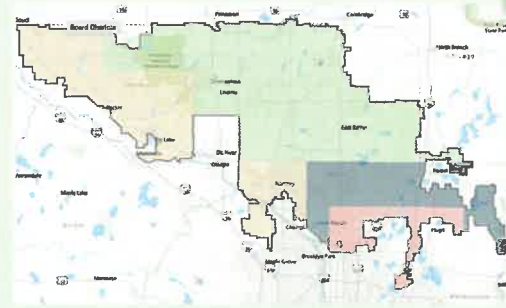
Board of directors



Mike Thews, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer • **Mark Ethen**, Vice Chair • **Shelly Peterson**, Secretary/Treasurer • **Angie Ronayne** • **Sam Villella** • **Fran Bator**, Chair • **Rick Braastad** • **Joe Gruenes**

We heard you!

According to election ballot comments, some members wondered which district they reside in. **See the new director district map** on our Board & Bylaws page. Type your address into the map's search bar to find your district number.



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Connect with Connexus



Executive leadership



Linda Maegi, VP, Employee Services • **Brian Burandt**, Interim Co-CEO & VP, Power Supply & Business Development • **Nick Loehlein**, VP, Electric Operations • **Yan Paul Martinez**, Interim Co-CEO & CFO • **Mark Koplín**, VP, Technology • **Alison Miles**, VP, Members



Connexus Energy is offsetting 100% of the energy used for printing this newsletter with renewable energy credits.

Message to our Members

Connexus Energy has proven again and again to be flexible in adapting, whether the change is driven by technology, market economics, regulation or staffing. Connexus navigates change with excellence, never compromising in our commitment to providing affordable, reliable electric services, with nonprofit board governance as the bedrock of the cooperative.

We are pleased to share the board of directors' appointment of us as interim co-CEOs. With more than three decades of cooperative experience between us, we are committed to maintaining Connexus' strategic objectives and continuing the great, community-centered progress you expect. Here are two recent examples we're proud to share.

First, in June, Fitch Ratings, a national credit ratings agency, upgraded Connexus' rating to 'A' with a stable outlook. This is a testament to our financial strength.

Second, pending final construction inspections, we will be transforming the skirtland around a closed landfill into Minnesota's first "brightfields" solar project. A previous Minnesota state report identified 110 landfill sites that would be suitable for development, with this site as a best first example. Nationally and statewide, brightfield initiatives highlight opportunities for closed landfills and former mine sites to be repurposed for solar energy generation facilities that also benefit local communities with new tax revenue. It's exciting to be able to work with local governments on projects that drive economic activity.

This project exemplifies our commitment to sustainability and community enhancement. It demonstrates our innovative spirit and our dedication to utilizing resources in ways that benefit our members while contributing to economic development and local stewardship.

We welcome three new board directors, Joe Gruenes, Angie Ronayne and Sam Villella, and thank you for your participation in our annual meeting and cooperative election. Good governance by our locally elected board is critical to high-performing cooperatives like Connexus. Thank you for being an integral part of the Connexus community.

Sincerely,



Brian Burandt

Interim Co-CEO & VP, Power Supply & Business Development



Yan Paul Martinez

Interim Co-CEO & CFO


Safety Always

Our annual **Safety Stand Up Day** field activities included transformer bank refreshers by experienced lineworkers, classroom instruction on protective equipment by the Substation and Electrical Equipment Team and tree cutting safety by Asplundh Tree Service.



Congratulations to our newest journey lineworkers, Chad Johnson (pictured) and Tanner Ellis. Becoming a journey lineworker requires four years of on-the-job training and satisfactorily completing the Career Development for Lineworkers curriculum that includes performance-based skill of over 300 tasks. Demonstrating initiative to work safely and developing teamwork and communication skills are critical in the apprentice learning experience and beyond. We have six apprentice lineworkers working toward their journey status.





We used the **Connexus drone** to capture Wright Tree Service clearing vegetation by using a mechanical trimmer (Jarraff) to increase safety and efficiency during a routine maintenance project. Routine vegetation activities are completed every five to eight years.



This new F-350 was upfitted with a snowplow and an external fuel tank (pictured in the truck's bed). One use for the fuel tank is refilling generators in the field for critical members who cannot be without power.



When a member installs an on-site energy generation source, like solar, the extra energy created goes onto our power grid. Our field workers need to be aware of that generation for their safety when working on the lines or equipment, so we place a **G sticker** on the padmount transformer (as pictured here) or the pole of the overhead transformer that is connected to the generation source.



Chad is working on our capital project, which converts existing overhead services to underground in a portion of Blaine. This will **improve the reliability of electric service** to those members by preventing future power outages due to weather and trees.

Integrating Innovation



SolarWise yard signs help members show their support for renewable energy, and they are popping up more and more. These members pay an additional fee on their regular bill to offset all (or half) of their home's electric usage with local solar energy produced by the Connexus solar arrays.



We're beginning an **improved technology rollout for our interruptible irrigation members** to transition from radio controls to cellular controls. Members who need to opt out during a load control event will be able to safely do so with the flip of a switch.



A Connexus contractor, Utili-Tech, **inspected more than 5,000 utility poles** this spring by drilling near the bottom to look for decay. Poles that didn't pass inspection will be replaced. Strong poles ensure your safety and the safety of our lineworkers.



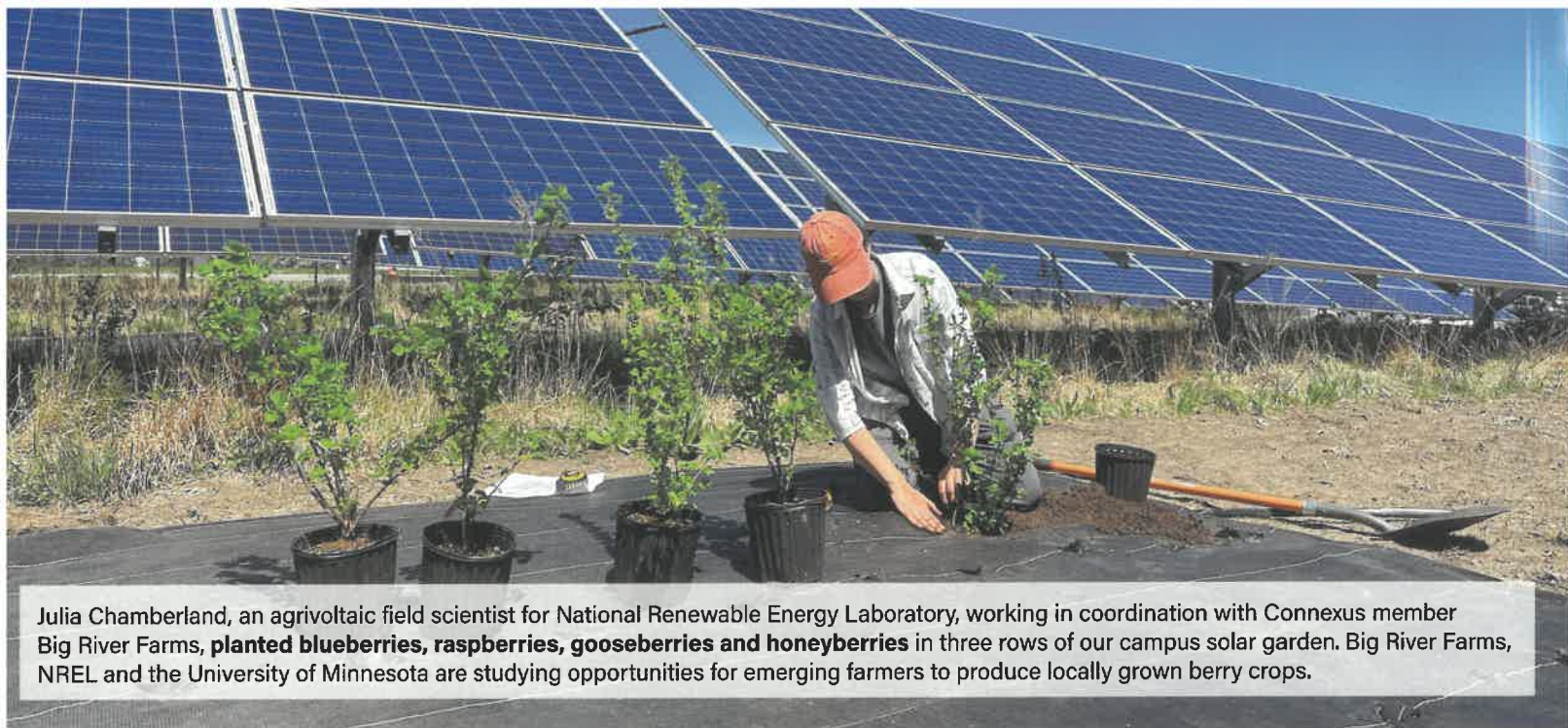
A low hour **750 kW generator** was installed in June, replacing our old 630 kW generator. It will continue to be a key piece of our load management strategy in the summer months and beyond. Rob Olson from Facilities Services managed the installation.



We added five **variable frequency drives (VFDs)** to our geothermal fluid pump motors. They are controlled by differential pressure sensors to supply our campus' water source heat pumps with just the right amount of flow for optimal efficiency, significantly reducing our energy consumption and reducing wear and tear on our geothermal system. With the energy saved, the VFDs should pay for themselves within three years.



A **queen bumblebee** visited one of the hundreds of flowering native plants on our campus solar garden.



Julia Chamberland, an agrivoltaic field scientist for National Renewable Energy Laboratory, working in coordination with Connexus member Big River Farms, **planted blueberries, raspberries, gooseberries and honeyberries** in three rows of our campus solar garden. Big River Farms, NREL and the University of Minnesota are studying opportunities for emerging farmers to produce locally grown berry crops.

Co-op Cuisine

“DOCTORED” WHIP CREAM WITH FRESH LOCAL BERRIES

Recommended by Uwe Kortshagen, a Connexus member and University of Minnesota professor

- 4 teaspoons cold water
- 1 teaspoon unflavored gelatin powder (or shaved/grated from a block)
- 1 cup cold heavy whipping cream
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Add water to a microwave safe bowl and sprinkle the unflavored gelatin on top. Allow to sit for 2-3 minutes.
2. Microwave mixture for just a few seconds until gelatin fully dissolves. Stir and set aside to cool.
3. Combine heavy whipping cream, powdered sugar and vanilla extract in a large mixing bowl. Whip with whisk attachment until mixture starts to thicken and forms soft peaks, and then turn the mixer to low speed.
4. Slowly pour in the gelatin mixture until well combined. Increase the mixer to medium speed and continue mixing until stiff peaks form.
5. Serve with fresh local berries like raspberries, blueberries and honeyberries. Make it fancy by using a piping bag.

This summer, Dr. Kortshagen was awarded a University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment Impact Goals grant to study growing Minnesota hardy local berries in and around solar arrays, a practice known as agrivoltaics.





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The Connexus Energy FoundationSM awarded \$57,000 in scholarships to 60 students at 20 high schools. Our board directors attended awards ceremonies to congratulate the class of 2024. Director Angie Ronayne is pictured with Claire Hentges from Champlin Park High School.



These four students attended our annual meeting on April 18 and each won a \$1,000 scholarship in our new attendance drawing. Justin Kroeze, Brandon Forsyth, Zach Davis and Katherine James are pictured with Yan Paul Martinez and Mark Koplin from The Connexus Energy Foundation.



More than 70 fourth grade students joined Connexus board directors and staff to tour our campus solar array in late May. **Students learned how some solar designs can allow for farming activities** and stewardship like pollinator-friendly ground cover.



Tessa Haagenson and Rob Davis represented Connexus at an awards ceremony in recognition of **Connexus being named to Fast Company's prestigious list of the Most Innovative Companies of 2024.**



Connexus employees can ride two Townie - Electra electric bikes (shown with Rachel Strange and Scott Johnson). Our e-bikes were purchased with a grant from the Anoka County Statewide Health Improvement Partnership.